



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

Memorandum

Date: June 18, 2001

Subject: **1997 Railroad Employee Fatalities: A Comprehensive Study**

From: George A. Gavalla
Associate Administrator for Safety

To: Distribution

On behalf of the Office of Safety, I am pleased to distribute this report, entitled "1997 Railroad Employee Fatalities: A Comprehensive Study," designed to promote and enhance awareness of many unsafe behaviors and conditions that typically contribute to railroad employee fatalities. By furthering our understanding of the causes of railroad employee fatalities, this report is intended to assist railroad industry stakeholders in their efforts to prevent similar tragedies.

In addition to the individual narrative reports (provided in the past), this document contains the following *new* materials:

- Yard and accident scene diagrams which accompany 28 narrative reports for calendar year 1997;
- Narrative matrix entitled "Analysis of 1997 Employee Fatalities," which highlights important elements of each fatality, particularly the possible contributing factors. This format allows the reader to walk through and analyze each fatality scenario, identifying ways the fatalities could have been prevented;
- Findings which help to identify *who* the majority of fatally injured employees were (i.e. craft, job position, age group, years of service); *when* they were fatally injured (i.e. time of year, time of day); *where* the incidents occurred (i.e. region, type of railroad); and most importantly, *why* they occurred in terms of possible contributing factors; and
- Bar and pie charts which illustrate the above findings.

This document will serve as a model for future reports. A comprehensive analysis of 1998 railroad employee fatalities is in progress.